



Storrow Drive Tunnel Project
Landscaping Advisory Committee Meeting Number 3

March 21, 2007

Summary Minutes

Welcome and Introductions

Patrice Todisco, Chairperson, welcomed the group at 5:21 PM and said she would be facilitating the meeting and discussion. She asked those present to introduce themselves (see Attendance). She reviewed the agenda and pointed out that one of the handouts is a draft document describing the landscape history of the Esplanade. This document was prepared by Shary Berg for The Esplanade Association to help the Association create a management plan for the area. The Esplanade Association is also working on developing a user survey (April 22) in two parts: (1) counts of entrances/exits to the park as well; and (2) in-depth interviews with 400 users.

Ms. Todisco then welcomed Karl Haglund, DCR, to provide a history of the Esplanade. Before he began his presentation, Mr. Haglund noted that the Esplanade is a totally fabricated landscape. He also mentioned that the term “Esplanade” initially referred to an area in Cambridge, but the use migrated to the other side of the Charles River in the 1920s. He recommended the book, *Walking Tours of Boston's Made Land*, by Nancy S. Seasholes, for more background reading.

Review of Public Participation Process

Mr. Haglund outlined the public participation process, noting the future meetings of the Transportation and Landscape Advisory Committee, the DEIR Comment Process (May – June 2007), public meetings (June-August 2007), and the FEIR Comment Process (September-October 2007). After the FEIR Comment Process, the Certificate of the Secretary of Environmental Affairs is issued.

Mr. Haglund noted that the lengthy state and local review process and listed the relevant agencies who will be commenting: Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA), Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD), Boston Conservation Commission, Boston Landmarks Commission, Boston

Transportation Department, and the City of Cambridge. He added that the review by MHC will be particularly rigorous; if the project is determined to have an adverse affect on the Esplanade, DCR will have to consult with MHC to discuss ways to eliminate, minimize or mitigate the adverse effects.

Mr. Haglund reviewed the draft criteria for the preferred option. There are a set of goals for the construction period as well as long-term use for the Esplanade itself, traffic and the surrounding neighborhoods. The selected design options are:

- **Option A: Rehabilitate Existing Tunnel Maintaining Current Configuration**
- **Option B: Eliminate Tunnel and Build Roadways at Grade**
- **Option C: Eastbound Roadway at Grade with New Westbound Tunnel**
- **Option D: New Eastbound and Westbound Tunnels**

Presentation on the History of the Esplanade

Mr. Haglund narrated a PowerPoint presentation on the history of the Esplanade that included historic photographs and design drawings. He noted in the presentation that the Esplanade was designed as a plain, unadorned landscape with a few key landmarks. He also discussed the history of Storrow Drive, which was built after the Esplanade. Mr. Haglund concluded his presentation by noting there is a legal obligation to project this landscape, and that “we are the temporary stewards.” The power point presentation has been posted on the DCR website at: www.mass.gov/dcr

Linda Cox, Beacon Hill Civic Association, thanked Mr. Haglund for his presentation. She added that the Esplanade was created by unsung heroes including Charles Elliott, Arthur Shurcliff, James and Helen Storrow, and Charles Ennis. She said that the committee is charged with protecting this landscape.

Ms. Todisco asked Ms. Berg if she had anything to add to the presentation. Ms. Berg noted that the access to information about the Esplanade at DCR has been made easier by a new plans archivist. Representative Marty Walz asked Ms. Berg to elaborate about which parts of the landscaping were worth sacrificing and which were worth saving. Ms. Berg said that there should be no net loss of parkland; also, the linearity and connectivity of the space is very important. She also added concern about noise. Ms. Todisco said that as the Existing Conditions work is refined, these could develop into principles.

Presentation on Options D1 and D2 Site Plans

Harry Fuller, Project Manager from Carol R. Johnson Associates, landscape architects, then presented the two new D options for that alternative. He began by reviewing all the options that had been presented previously, including Option A, which may feature reconstruction of footbridges to make them ADA accessible.

Representative Walz said that the reconstruction of the footbridges is just an option. Representative Walz said the committee will have to have detailed drawings of the

footbridges to determine what the new footprint of the bridges would be. Bill Kuttner, CTPS, asked if steps would be permitted on the corners of the footbridges in order to maintain ADA compliance. Mr. Fuller said steps are permitted if other paths are accessible. Representative Walz said that this is a land taking issue on the Back St. side, as well.

Margaret Dyson asked if there would be land takings for a reconstructed Fiedler footbridge as well. Mr. Fuller said he did not know yet. Ms. Todisco asked if there is a mandate to maintain the historic integrity of the Fieldler footbridge. Mr. Haglund said that typically structures do not get evaluated until threatened. He said it may have an architectural significance as well as a social and historic one.

Mr. Fuller then began to review the tree plantings for Option A. Representative Walz asked for more detail about the construction stage and a tree inventory. Mr. Fuller said more staging detail will be available at the next meeting. [NOTE: The Esplanade Association's Tree Inventory report includes this information for trees located north of Storrow Drive.]

Ms. Todisco asked for more detail about the "construction zone." Mr. Fuller said that the team is working under the assumption of a partial closure schedule, with temporary roadways. Representative Walz asked for more detail, noting that the committee was recently told that there may be a 20 foot incursion into parkland on the northside. Mr. Fuller said that detail will be provided, but it may be more like a 10 foot incursion.

A participant asked if the tree design would be subject to further review. Mr. Fuller said that the diagrams shown are very early and could almost be viewed as placeholders. Ms. Cox said it is important to know which trees will be affected because if the oldest trees are impacted, there will be a lot of emotion associated with these decisions. Mr. Fuller said that the team will have to examine the plantings tree by tree. Representative Walz asked when this examination will occur. Mr. Fuller said it is typically part of the 25% design effort, after a preferred option is determined.

Representative Walz said that she believes the preferred option should be determined after the DEIR so the committee has more information before a decision is made. Mr. Haglund said having a recommended option in a draft does not mean that a final decision has been made. He said that it takes a great deal of design money to analyze four options. Mr. Kuttner suggested maybe that the options could be taken to 10-11% design, not 25% to gain more wiggle room. Bob Sloan, Walk Boston, said the level of recommendation should reflect the level of the design. Mr. Haglund suggested obtaining detailed information on land area and specific tree takings during construction for all four alternatives. He noted that the pedestrian bridge design should have no impact on tree takings/plantings. He thinks that this specific land area analysis could be done fairly quickly. Ms. Todisco said that the committee would like to see that done.

Ms. Dyson pointed out that the staging area will be relatively the same for all four alternatives. She also noted that the team should make an effort to make sure it is functionally realistic.

Due to time constraints, Ms. Todisco asked Mr. Fuller to skip ahead to the new D options. Each set of drawings included two plans: open space and tree planting. Mr. Fuller oriented the committee members to the keys to the diagrams, coloring, etc., before walking the committee through the options. He noted that these new D options were developed in order to help eliminate the problem of the westbound exit onto Arlington Street bisecting new open space created over the tunnels. He noted that these new options do not address the open topped ventilation system, which is part of all D options.

Mr. Sloan asked if the on-grade pedestrian walkways shown would be signalized. Mr. Fuller said they would.

Option D1:

In this option, the below-grade Westbound exit to Arlington (Otter) Street is replaced with an at-grade exit running parallel to Mugar Way. Mugar Way is a two-way Street at the Beacon St. intersection section only; it is one-way from Beaver Place to Pinckney Street. The revision to the westbound Arlington exit allows for a gracious, unobstructed pedestrian entry from Beacon Street to the Esplanade. Pedestrians do not cross traffic at the Arlington Street entrance, but do cross traffic lanes at Mt. Vernon Street.

Option D2:

In this option, the westbound exit to Arlington (Otter) Street is replaced by a Berkeley St. exit. Berkeley and Clarendon Streets reverse direction from Storrow Drive to Columbus Avenue. The Berkeley Eastbound on ramp is removed. Clarendon Street provides an eastbound entrance. There is continuous open space from Arlington to Mt. Vernon, and pedestrians do not cross traffic at the Arlington Street park entrance. The access to the Esplanade is limited between Clarendon and Berkeley Streets. Pedestrian entry from Beacon Street to the Esplanade is expanded and safe, but constrained by a westbound boat section. The Esplanade access between Clarendon and Berkeley is reduced due to the eastbound ramp.

A participant asked if the Berkeley Street direction is reversed if the streets beyond it would also be reversed. Mr. Haglund said this issue has been raised with the Boston Transportation Department; it is a decision that would be made by the City of Boston. Jim Baecker, DCR, added that the impact of reversing Berkeley and Clarendon Streets to Columbus Avenue will be examined at this time.

Another participant asked if it is possible to replace the open-topped ventilation system with a jet fan to eliminate the proposed hole in the Esplanade. Mr. Baecker said that DEP has very stringent mechanical ventilation standards, but noted that if these options were carried, other ventilation schemes could be examined. In order to ventilate with jet fans, the tunnels would need to be widened. It may also be possible to provide natural

ventilation in the new tunnels using the eastbound off ramp boat section, reducing the size of tunnel roof openings at the Esplanade.

Ms. Dyson noted that in the original D option, the cross street access was cut off. Mr. McCall said that the basic D option has an at-grade crossing at Mt. Vernon Street, not Chestnut. Mr. Fuller said it is difficult to get an at-grade access at Berkeley without moving the portal back further.

Ms. Dyson asked about the challenges of planting trees on top of tunnels. Mr. Fuller said there are irrigation issues that will necessitate more maintenance (no groundwater for the trees) and the tree species selected can only have root systems that are 3 feet deep.

Mr. Sloan said that in the D1 option, there is no pedestrian crossing at Chestnut and Mt. Vernon. He asked if there could be a signal. Mr. McCall said it is a difficult problem, but it could be examined.

There was a discussion of the off ramps featured in the D1 Option. Mr. Fuller said that the off ramps were: westbound to Beacon and eastbound at Beacon Street. Mr. McCall said it is the same as what is there today, but separated.

A participant asked if there would be a change in direction of streets on Beacon Hill as well. Mr. McCall said there would not. He said that the team has been asked to look at a two-way Charles Street or a reversed direction on Charles Street between Charles Circle and Beacon Street during construction only, but that it is a controversial suggestion.

Mr. Fuller was then asked to briefly review the A, B and C Options, which he did.

Ms. Cox mentioned that at the February 28th meeting, it was stated that within DCR, there is support for each of the options, although support for Option C was lagging. She wondered if any Option will be dropped earlier from more detailed analysis. Mr. Baecker said that all four alternatives will be compared in the DEIR. He added that the Committee could deliberate independently to develop its own recommendation.

A participant asked if DCR could project the longevity of a newly constructed tunnel. Mr. McCall noted that 75 years is the design life for new tunnels; 40 years is the design life of rehabilitated tunnels. Roadways last for a much longer period of time so Option B has the longest lifespan.

An attendee asked about the maintenance needed for the tree plantings. Mr. Fuller said the heavily used areas will need careful planning.

There was a request for more factual information before the committee could deliberate on the options. Mr. Haglund said that the schedule is being driven by the traffic information. The issue for providing additional landscaping information is money, not time. He said that DCR will discuss this issue and resolve it.

Ms. Cox asked if the final decision will be affected by the costs of each option. Mr. Haglund said that cost is a factor, as is construction time.

A participant requested that the information about shallow tree root plantings above tunnels and the need for irrigation be a part of the document itself, because this is an important issue.

Ms. Dyson recommended that the design drawings incorporate a Shurcliff perspective. Mr. Fuller said that the team is not at that point yet, but it will be included.

ATTENDANCE

Landscaping Committee Members (+ indicates present at meeting)

+	Margaret Dyson	City of Boston, Parks and Recreation Department
+	Bob Corning	Boston Society of Landscape Architects
	Tel McCormick	Mass Bike
	Wendy Landman	Walk Boston
+	Bob Sloan	Walk Boston
+	Patrice Todisco	The Esplanade Association
	Renata von Tscharner	Charles River Conservancy
	Pallavi Mande	Charles River Watershed Association
+	Susan Barrow-Williams	Community Boating-
	Sarah Monaco	Back Bay Garden Club
	Jackie Blombach	Back Bay Garden Club
+	Linda Cox	Beacon Hill Civic Association
+	Sharon Malt	Beacon Hill Garden Club

Transportation Committee Members (+ indicates present at meeting)

	Tom Nally	A Better City
	Meg Mainzer-Cohen	Back Bay Association
	Deborah Carrow	Back Bay Association
+	Peter Thomson	Beacon Hill Civic Association
+	Steve Young	Beacon Hill Civic Association
	Elliott Laffer	Boston Groundwater Trust
	Michael Donovan	Boston University
+	Jim Shaer	Boston University
	Leslie Greis	Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association
	Drew Phelps	Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association
	Kevin Casey	Harvard University
	Jeff Rosenblum	Livable Streets Alliance
	Christi Apicella	MASCO
	Sarah Hamilton	MASCO
	Kelley Brown	MIT
+	Steve Wintermeier	Neighborhood Association of Back Bay
+	Barry Solar	Neighborhood Association of Back Bay
	John Messervy	MGH/Partners Health Care System, Inc.
	Bonnie Michelman	MGH/Partners Health Care System, Inc.
	Marilyn Wellons	Regional Transportation Advisory Council
	Larry Adkins	Riverside Neighborhood Association
	Malek Al-Khatib	West End Civic Association
	Robin Assaf	West End Civic Association
	Wendy Landman	Walk Boston
	Bob Sloane	Walk Boston
	Adam Shulman	City of Cambridge, Transportation Planning

Elected Official

Martha Walz

State Representative

Municipal and State Representatives

Bill Kuttner

CTPS

Tom Lisco

CTPS

Project Staff

Jim Baecker

DCR

Karl Haglund

DCR

David Lenhardt

DCR

Harry Fuller

Carol R. Johnson Associates

Mike McCall

SGH

Regan Checchio

RVA

Mike Wesielewski

Beta

Members of the Public

Karen Taylor

Beacon Hill Times

Shayndi Raice

Boston Courant

Shary Berg

Joe Crowley

Mass General Hospital

Catherine Bordon

Neighborhood Association of Back Bay